WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image output control apparatus which is connected to an input device inputting image data and plural image output devices through a communication medium, and can control image output of the plural image output devices, comprising:

first setting means for setting the total number of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices;

first storage means for storing distribution priority order for distributing the total number of output copies set by said first setting means to the plural image output devices; and

control means for performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of the distribution priority order.

2. An apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising second storage means for storing a limitation value for limiting the number of distribution copies in the total number of output copies for each image output device,

wherein said control means performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies to the image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of the limitation values and the distribution

priority order.

3. An apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the sum of the limitation values of the image output devices outputting the image data, said control means performs the control to distribute to each image output device the number of output copies equal to the limitation value of this image output device, in the order of the image output device of high distribution priority order.

4. An apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the limitation value of the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest in the image output devices outputting the image data, said control means performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies only to the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest.

5. An apparatus according to Claim 2, further comprising:

display means for displaying information concerning the distribution priority order; and

second setting means for setting the distribution priority order for each image output device in

accordance with operator's input based on the information displayed on said display means,

wherein said first storage means stores the distribution priority order set by said setting means.

6. An apparatus according to Claim 5, further comprising:

registration means for grouping the set values of the distribution priority order for each image output device set by said second setting means, giving a group name to the grouped set values, and registering them; and

third storage means for storing the registration information registered by said registration means,

wherein said second setting means sets the distribution priority order of each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in said third storage means, in accordance with designation of the group name by an operator.

7. An apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said display means can simultaneously display the plural group names stored in said third storage means, and said second setting means sets the distribution priority order for each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in said third storage means, according as any one of the plural

group names displayed by said display means is selected by the operator.

8. An image output control method which controls image output by plural image output devices connected to an input device inputting image data through a communication medium, said method comprising:

a first setting step of setting the total number of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices; and

a control step of performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of the distribution priority order previously stored in a memory and for distributing the total number of output copies set in said first setting step to the plural image output devices.

9. A method according to Claim 8, wherein said control step performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies to the image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of limitation values previously stored in the memory and for limiting the number of distribution copies in the total number of output copies for each image output device, and the distribution priority order.

10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the sum of the limitation values of the image output devices outputting the image data, said control step performs the control to distribute to each image output device the number of output copies equal to the limitation value of this image output device, in the order of the image output device of high distribution priority order.

11. A method according to Claim 9, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the limitation value of the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest in the image output devices outputting the image data, said control step performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies only to the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest.

12. A method according to Claim 9, further comprising:

a display step of displaying information concerning the distribution priority order on a display; and

a second setting step of setting the distribution priority order for each image output device in accordance with operator's input based on the

information displayed on the display in said display step,

wherein the distribution priority order set in said setting step is stored in a memory.

13. A method according to Claim 12, further comprising:

a registration step of grouping the set values of the distribution priority order for each image output device set in said second setting step, giving a group name to the grouped set values, registering them, and storing thus obtained registration information in the memory,

wherein said second setting step sets the distribution priority order of each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in the memory, in accordance with designation of the group name by an operator.

14. An ~~apparatus~~ method according to Claim 13, wherein said display step can simultaneously display on the display the plural group names stored in the memory in said registration step, and said second setting step sets the distribution priority order for each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in the memory in said registration step, according as any one of the plural group names

displayed in said display step is selected by the operator.

15. A storage medium which stores a program code of a computer which performs an image output control process to control image output by plural image output devices connected to an input device inputting image data through a communication medium, comprising:

a code for performing a first setting process of setting the total number of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices; and

a code for performing a control process of performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of the distribution priority order previously stored in a memory and for distributing the total number of output copies set in said first setting process to the plural image output devices.

16. An image output control apparatus which is connected to an input device inputting image data and plural image output devices through a communication medium, and can control image output of the plural image output devices, comprising:

first setting means for setting the total number

of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices;

first storage means for storing distribution priority order for distributing the total number of output copies set by said first setting means to the plural image output devices;

second storage means for storing a limitation value for limiting the number of distribution copies in the total number of output copies set by said first setting means, for each image output device; and

control means for performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of the distribution priority order and the limitation values.

17. An apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the sum of the limitation values of the image output devices outputting the image data, said control means performs the control to distribute to each image output device the number of output copies equal to the limitation value of this image output device, in the order of the image output device of high distribution priority order.

18. An apparatus according to Claim 16, wherein,

when the total number of output copies is smaller than the limitation value of the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest in the image output devices outputting the image data, said control means performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies only to the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest.

19. An apparatus according to Claim 16, further comprising:

display means for displaying information concerning the distribution priority order; and

second setting means for setting the distribution priority order for each image output device in accordance with operator's input based on the information displayed on said display means,

wherein said first storage means stores the distribution priority order set by said setting means.

20. An apparatus according to Claim 19, further comprising:

registration means for grouping the set values of the distribution priority order for each image output device set by said second setting means, giving a group name to the grouped set values, and registering them; and

third storage means for storing the registration

information registered by said registration means,

wherein said second setting means sets the distribution priority order of each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in said third storage means, in accordance with designation of the group name by an operator.

21. An apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said display means can simultaneously display the plural group names stored in said third storage means, and said second setting means sets the distribution priority order for each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in said third storage means, according as any one of the plural group names displayed by said display means is selected by the operator.

22. An image output control method which controls image output by plural image output devices connected to an input device inputting image data through a communication medium, said method comprising:

a first setting step of setting the total number of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices; and

a control step of performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the

basis of distribution priority order previously stored in a memory and for distributing the total number of output copies to the plural image output devices and limitation values previously stored in the memory and for limiting the number of distribution copies in the total number of output copies for each image output device.

23. A method according to Claim 22, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the sum of the limitation values of the image output devices outputting the image data, said control step performs the control to distribute to each image output device the number of output copies equal to the limitation value of this image output device, in the order of the image output device of high distribution priority order.

24. A method according to Claim 22, wherein, when the total number of output copies is smaller than the limitation value of the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest in the image output devices outputting the image data, said control step performs the control to distribute the total number of output copies only to the image output device of which distribution priority order is highest.

25. A method according to Claim 22, further comprising:

a display step of displaying information concerning the distribution priority order on a display; and

a second setting step of setting the distribution priority order for each image output device in accordance with operator's input based on the information displayed on the display in said display step,

wherein the distribution priority order set in said setting step is stored in a memory.

26. A method according to Claim 25, further comprising:

a registration step of grouping the set values of the distribution priority order for each image output device set in said second setting step, giving a group name to the grouped set values, registering them, and storing thus obtained registration information in the memory,

wherein said second setting step sets the distribution priority order of each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in the memory, in accordance with designation of the group name by an operator.

27. An apparatus according to Claim 26, wherein said display step can simultaneously display on the display the plural group names stored in the memory in said registration step, and said second setting step sets the distribution priority order for each image output device on the basis of the registration information stored in the memory in said registration step, according as any one of the plural group names displayed in said display step is selected by the operator.

28. A storage medium which stores a program code of a computer which performs an image output control process to control image output by plural image output devices connected to an input device inputting image data through a communication medium, comprising:

a code for performing a first setting process of setting the total number of output copies when the image data is output by the plural image output devices; and

a code for performing a control step of performing control to distribute the total number of output copies to the respective image output devices outputting the image data, on the basis of distribution priority order previously stored in a memory and for distributing the total number of output copies to the plural image output devices and limitation values previously stored

in the memory and for limiting the number of distribution copies in the total number of output copies for each image output device.